



Denny

by Frank C. Robertson

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HIS bulging, muscular jaws and long, powerful limbs came from Great Dane ancestors; a strain of terrier from somewhere on his mother's side contributed a funny, fuzzy face and a surplus of hair; but it was the shepherd blood in him which gave him his acute, sensitive intelligence. All breeds were merged in him into just plain sheep-dog.

Denny's first recollection was of dreamy days spent loafing on a horse-blanket under a sheep-wagon; the purple passages being when his shepherd mother occasionally sneaked away from the herd to give him nourishment.

Then, too, the monotony of life was broken every three or four days when the camp-mover would bundle him up, horse-blanket and all, and stuff him into a tub on the boot behind the wagon. Then followed a rough ride to the next bed-ground which almost jolted the life out of him.

Before he was old enough to go with the herd, his mother and the herder, the outfit went into Winter quarters on the owner's ranch, and Denny, ganging up with half a dozen other pups, became an abomination as they hilariously chased loose stock and passing teams without rime or reason.

Spring came, and good sheep-dogs were found to be at a premium. Many herders had to go out with only a green pup. Thus it happened that Denny one day found one end of an unchewable wire attached to his collar and the other end of the wire in the hands of Bill Peterson, a herder.

At first Denny objected strenuously. Be-

ing a gangster and a rough-neck on the ranch was much more exciting than a humdrum existence in the hills. But Bill had a way with dogs, and Denny possessed quick adaptability. In a week Bill was Denny's god, and he was able to eliminate the wire.

Denny's training began immediately. Bill was a big, quiet fellow whose every speech and action meant business—and Denny quickly found it out.

"Git 'way round 'em, Denny," Bill ordered with a suggestive wave of the hand in the direction in which he wished the dog to go.

"With a *whoof* of delight Denny went after the sheep—straight into the middle of the herd. The sheep scattered in all directions, and Denny joyfully grabbed the closest one. The next moment a rock landed in his ribs—not hard enough to do him any permanent injury; but it knocked the breath out of him and bowled him over.

"Come back here," Bill ordered without anger as soon as the pup got to his feet.

That was lesson No. One. Bill had never read a word about dog training—didn't know, in fact, that there was any science attached to it. But his method did the business.

Finally Denny grasped the fact that he must stay on the outside of the herd. On his first attempt after realizing that he went clear around them as if he were shot out of a gun; nor did he stop until the sheep were wadded into a compact ball of wool, which heaved and squirmed like a pile of maggots as the sheep piled over each other.

Still he went round and round, too excited to hear the herder's commands to stop. Again the rock landed in his ribs. Lesson No. Two.

He soon learned to go when told, and to stop when told. Then he learned to watch Bill's arm for the direction in which to go, and finally how far to go by the length of the gesture. Bill soon omitted the arm motion and even speech; signifying his wishes by movements of his head.

Denny learned that upon first being sent around the herd he was to lope a rod or so away from the leaders and make no sound. Usually this was sufficient to turn the leaders gently back in another direction. But if a sharp turning was necessary the second time the dog sped like a bullet, sounding his war-whoop and knocking over any laggard that chanced to get in his way. That was what Bill called "warmin' 'em up." Denny was a past-master at it.

Soon Denny began to understand the philosophy of herding, and his movements were largely automatic. Yet he knew instinctively what to do without being told by Bill.

At noon Bill would leave him with the herd while he went to camp for lunch. The herd was always in good control when Bill returned—always with Denny's dinner.

The Summer passed, and Denny became a master sheep-dog. That Winter Bill had to care for several bunches of bucks which were kept in the bunch pens in the lambing-sheds on the ranch. Each bunch had to be driven out to grain and water separately through a series of alleys to the main corral, where were the feed and water troughs. Within a week Denny knew exactly what to do with each bunch. Bill opened the gates and Denny did the rest.

But Denny was glad when Spring came and he and Bill were back on the range. Sheep-herders are said to shun society, but the most melancholy of them are gluttons for sociability compared to the average sheep-dog. Denny was now seventy-five pounds of bone and sinew, and he cared for only two things—Bill Peterson and the herd.

Life was a thing of joy these days for Denny. Following the herd with Bill morning and evening, lazing around in the shade of the fragrant pines during the middle of the day and barking good-natured defiance at the yelling coyotes by night, life slipped by like one long, golden dream.

He lived well—Bill saw to that. Denny's sour-dough biscuits were never stale or soggy, and the mutton gravy on them was always warm. Then too there was an occasional fried egg, and always the mutton bones. Denny was the *ne plus ultra* of contentment.

They summered on the extreme eastern slope of the Caribou Range; in a rough, timber-covered; cañon-gashed region where the only means of transportation were pack-mules, and these were limited strictly to a few well-defined pack-trails. But the feed was good and the herd was rolling in fat long before shipping-time.

The range was so exceedingly good and the days so extremely pleasant in fact that Bill hesitated long before leaving it. He knew that it had been a hot, dry Summer, and that the grass on the flats and foothills had been shriveled up. Dave Shannon, the owner, had written advising him to stay as long as he could; therefore he clung to the mountains long after the other herds had departed.

Indeed it was late in October before Bill told his camp-mover to get ready to pull out. The thing which warned him that he had perhaps stayed too long was the grim, gray clouds, heavy and threatening, which squatted upon the mountain tops like bloated heathen idols.

The morning they were to start a sort of mist saturated the air and permeated the men's clothing. Even Denny felt it through his mat of thick hair and shivered.

"I reckon me an' Denny'll have to camp out with the herd to-night," Bill told the camp-mover. "If we drive the herd back the way you'll have to go with the camp outfit it'll take us four or five days, but if we take the herd on up to the top of old Baldy and down the north end we'll be able to meet you on McCoy Creek tomorrow night. I'll wrap up a little grub in a pair of blankets an' we'll be all right for one night."

"It'll save a lot of time if you don't mind sleepin' out," the camp-mover agreed.

Denny wagged his tail to show that he too was willing.

Bill made up a light pack and slung it on his back. It was rather unwieldy to climb a mountain with, but Bill was used to walking, and there would be plenty of chances to rest while Denny was urging the slow-moving herd along.

They started the herd up the top of a

long back-bone which ran down from the very summit of old Baldy. Once this ridge had been covered with timber, but in the not far distant past a forest fire had devastated that part of the mountain. Now dense masses of fallen timber blocked their passage continually, and made it totally impassable for mules and horses.

The sure-footed sheep, urged on by Denny, crawled under or over each obstruction like sand sifting through a gravel sieve. Bill, with his pack on his back, took the shortest possible route; often being compelled to crawl along the smooth surface of a fallen tree to get over some particular thick obstruction. Denny trotted gravely from edge to edge of the herd, keeping them ever going upward by turning the flanks inward and nipping the stragglers.

"We're goin' to sleep cold in our one pair of blankets if this damp keeps up," Bill told the dog once as Denny trotted by.

Denny showed his teeth in a grin as much as to say that it was nothing for he-fellows to endure.

At last it seemed that they were actually in the clouds. A fog so thick that it could almost be cut with a knife was upon them. It was impossible to see more than a rod in advance, and Bill was compelled to rely upon Denny to get the herd along.

The dog sensed his added responsibility, for he began to bark. Before he had worked silently, for the mere sight of him was sufficient to send them scurrying out of his way. Now that only a few of them at a time could see him he had to make himself heard.

Bill grinned in appreciation of the dog's acumen. He looked at his watch and found that it was past noon; then he whistled to Denny and they had lunch together.

"Push 'em boy; keep 'em movin'," Bill said when they had finished eating.

Denny wagged his tail, gave a short, snappy bark to show that he understood and plunged into the fog.

Up and up the dog worked the reluctant herd, so engrossed in the arduous task that for a time he forgot his master. The fog blotted out the outline of the mountain; and Denny was vaguely puzzled when he discovered that the herd was no longer going up-hill, but was lining out horizontally on the side of a ridge. He knew they had not changed directions on him, so they must have reached the summit and, true to sheep

nature, were refusing to go down-hill if they could possibly travel on a level.

As a matter of fact the herd had reached the summit of old Baldy in a low place and had gone on around the other side following old sheep-trails which led to the south.

Denny grew more and more perplexed. He knew the herd should be headed, but he did not know in which direction they should go. He stopped and waited anxiously for Bill's instructing-whistle, but no sound came. He trotted anxiously from flank to flank of the herd with every acute sense on the alert to find Bill—but Bill was not there.

The dog stopped and whiffed anxiously at the air; but the only scent he caught was that of the herd. He lifted his voice in a loud, inquiring howl, then sat back on his haunches while he waited for Bill's answering shout. None came.

Again and again he repeated his inquiry until the howl became a wail. Eventually the terrible truth soaked into his consciousness—Bill was lost.

Denny struck out on the back trail. A drizzling rain had been falling for some time, but the heavy fog still endured. It was impossible even for the dog to tell whether he was on the right trail except by smelling of the sheep-tracks, which were still warm, though the drizzle was fast destroying these.

The dog reached the place where he and Bill had eaten their lunch. Then Denny loosed what was, indeed, a mournful howl. It was the first time he had ever been separated from his master when he did not know where to find him.

But Denny was not of the kind to give way to despondency. The master was lost; therefore he must be found.

Denny smelled around until he found Bill's tracks. They could not be traced by sight, for even Bill's heavy, hob-nailed shoes could make no impression on the rank, slippery grass. The scent was cold, yet by tremendous concentration the dog was able to follow it for some distance.

Joyfully Denny realized that Bill had been going upward—toward the herd. Yet he wondered vaguely why he had not met him, or why Bill had not replied to his eager barking.

The trail became more and more difficult to follow, especially as Bill frequently was obliged to walk along dead logs, or cross ledges of naked rock. And the drizzle was

relentlessly washing away what few signs were left.

At last Denny came to a big, fallen tamarack from which the bark had slipped, leaving the surface as slick and slippery as a peeled onion. He sniffed around it san guinely while a low whine sounded softly from his throat. The scent there seemed to be just a mere trifle stronger than it had been before.

At last he became satisfied that Bill had walked along that log. He sprang on to it, and his feet slipped from the smooth surface. Cat-like he recovered himself in mid-air and landed on his feet. Next time he tried it more circumspectly.

As he moved along inch by inch with his sensitive nostrils close to the wood he became more doubtful. Half-way along it he lost the scent altogether. He went on to the end but he could not pick it up again. He retraced his steps to the stump, and several times he thought he had the scent; but each time he lost it before he could get away from the log.

It rained. As the worried dog smelled around and around the stump the last faint sign of Bill disappeared—and darkness, thick, clammy and black as ink, settled down. Denny acknowledged himself baffled. He sprang to the top of the stump and wailed out the sorrow and disappointment that was in him.



BILL PETERSON cursed the fog and the rain. He cursed the network of fallen logs which continuously impeded his progress, and above all else he cursed any man who was — fool enough to herd sheep. The one consoling feature about the whole business was that he had a dog who was capable of performing all the hard labor.

It was well for Bill that he had such a dog; for, blinded by the fog and burdened by the pack, it was all he could do to keep up with the herd. The only practical way to get across the barriers of down trees was to climb over the top of them, and frequently he was compelled to retrace his steps when he found the tops of the trees in such a tangle that he could not get through. And the drizzling rain was making sure footing more and more difficult.

He plumped up against a big, fallen tamarack from which the bark had slipped, leaving the surface as slick and slippery as a

peeled onion. The tip of it pointed up the mountain—the way he wanted to go. The tip was higher, much higher, than the butt. It was even possible that it was lodged; but it was also possible that the tip was lying upon other fallen trees over which he would be able to climb.

He drew himself to the top of the log and began to walk along it. The pitch became steeper and steeper. Bill peered ahead hard, trying to pierce the fog to see what he was coming to, but ten feet was the best he could do. He looked down to see what was underneath—and a foot slipped.

The herder pitched over backward, his heels in the air. The tamarack had fallen across a gully, the bottom of which was a veritable maze of small, fallen trees. Bill's head crashed onto something hard and everything turned black.

It was well for him that it did, for the fall was not yet over. His right leg shot between the forks of another down tree, but his body went on. The bone snapped midway between knee and ankle.

Half an hour later Bill regained consciousness. His head was hanging down, and there was an excruciating agony in his right leg. He reached up and caught a limb on a tree above him with both hands, and drew himself to a sitting position. After considerable pain and difficulty he succeeded in liberating the broken leg. He felt of it gingerly, and the realization that it was broken sent him into a momentary panic.

The camp-mover was miles away, so Bill realized that he was alone in the almost impenetrable fastnesses of old Baldy. It was a cinch that no man would ever find him where he was now. He must get out—must get down to McCoy Creek at the foot of old Baldy and wait for the camp-mover to come along.

Then he thought of Denny. Denny might be able to help. He whistled shrilly, but the dog did not come. For ten minutes he whistled and called, and then he was forced to admit that the dog had gone on with the herd. Bill had no idea of the length of time he had been unconscious nor consequently any idea of how far away the dog and the herd might be.

He gazed at the broken leg and saw that it was swelling rapidly. Each minute that he delayed meant that his chances for ultimately reaching McCoy Creek ahead of the camp-mover was lessened.

rope on one of the pack-mules and began to cut a couple of long, slender poles.

He lashed the poles to the sides of the pack-mules, leaving a space of ten feet between the tail of the lead mule and the head of the other. In this space he constructed a litter by fastening bedding to the poles. Into the litter he hoisted Bill. The camp-mover was efficient.

"But the herd," Bill objected. "The herd is somewhere up there on the top of old Baldy. We can't leave 'em there. There won't be a sheep left by the time we git somebody to come back an' look for 'em. There's two thousand head of sheep in that herd, an' they're worth twelve dollars a head. You go round 'em up, an' I'll wait here."

"You go to —," the camp-mover replied, unmoved. "It's seventy-five miles out of these mountains, an' another fifty to the ranch, an' twenty-five more for the doctor to travel out there after they phone to him. We ain't losin' no time."

"But Denny's up there, too," Bill protested.

"— Denny. He can take his chances with the coyotes. If he can't kill mutton enough to live on let him starve. You're goin' out of here, *pronto*."

Argument was in vain. The long, painful journey out of the mountains began. It was one long nightmare for Bill, though the camp-tender was a natural-born nurse.

After two full days' travel, besides the stub of that day, they fetched up at Dave Shannon's ranch. Bill had been out of his head for hours.

A doctor was phoned for at once, and Bill was made as comfortable as possible under the kindly care of Mrs. Shannon. Then Dave Shannon, the owner of the herd, began to make inquiries regarding the sheep.

"I don't know," the camp-mover said doubtfully. "I know in a general way where Bill left the herd, but that's all. It's been more than three days now since they've had a herder, an' it'll take us all of two more days to git back up there. Sheep rambles mighty bad this time o' the year, an' the varmints are powerful bad. If we ever find any sheep up there it'll be an accident."

"I'm afraid so," Shannon agreed, stoically enough considering that the loss of that herd of sheep spelled bankruptcy for him, and its recovery financial independence. "Anyway, it can't be helped. You couldn't

leave Bill up there with that broken leg. However, we'll make a search. We'll rustle all the men we can, and see if we can't find some of 'em at least."



BILL was gone. Gradually the full sense of that overwhelming calamity dawned upon Denny. Something had happened to his god, and he was crushed to earth. Blind instinct told the dog to take the back trail—to go back to where the camp had been that morning. He had actually gone fifty yards on the back trail before something stronger than instinct halted his steps.

The sheep were on trail. He had been working the herd up the mountain because Bill had told him to do that—and Bill had never told him that he was relieved. Bill had often left him with the sheep while he went to camp for something; therefore he must now intend him to stay with the herd.

Denny's tail drooped sorrowfully. Almost it seemed to him that he had disobeyed his beloved master's commands by deserting the herd to look for that master. When Bill wanted him to leave the herd he would say so.

Denny turned and retraced his steps up the mountain, though his steps were no longer springy. Something in his dog nature told him that all was not well with Bill. But his duty was plain, though unpleasant. He must remain faithful to Bill's trust in defiance of the instinct which told him to search until the master was found.

Dark and damp as it was, Denny reached the top of the mountain and picked up the trail of the herd. True to sheep nature, which is always to do the wrong thing, they had turned sharply to the south when they should have gone west or north. However, they were on the west side of the mountain, and they had been on the east side when they started.

Denny found the sheep at the bottom of a chaparral jungle so thick that they could not get through. Perforce they had bedded down where they were; it being sheep nature to go as long as the road was clear and then lie down and sulk at the first obstruction.

Denny found a flat rock above them and from that vantage point kept mournful, yet alert vigil through the night.

Morning came, and the fog still continued, though it lifted occasionally, giving a momentary view of the rugged mountainside.

At crack o' day the leaders of the herd began to move. They started upward and almost surrounded the dog before he announced his presence with his short, sharp, staccato bark of warning. Then they tumbled over each other in their haste to get out of his way. There being no other way out, they were obliged to go straight down the mountain.

Finally the tinkling of the bells told Denny that the leaders were getting far down the mountain, while some of the tail-enders were yet close to him. He knew this was not well, for Bill did not permit the herd to get too much of a scatter while on trail. And Denny sensed that they were on trail—out to where the timber ended and the sage-brush plain began. He suddenly went into action and whooped the stragglers on down.

Denny now had a purpose—to keep the herd moving; yet not so fast nor in so tight a bunch that they could not feed. From flank to flank of the herd he trotted, edging them gently in, and hurrying up the stragglers.

The leaders found a place where they could break through the chaparral and travel alongside the mountain to the south. Denny let them go for a while, but he was troubled about it. The fog foiled his efforts to get his bearings, but he was sure that the herd should be kept going downward. Finally he became certain of it, and he ran above the herd until he reached the leaders. Then he was in front of them with his menacing yelp. The leaders bent and continued downward.

Suddenly they broke through the cloud-bank into a glorious patch of sunlight. It was an inspiring scene—the heavy clouds atop old Baldy's massive dome like a mammoth wig, and below the fog and timber-line the green, red and yellow boughs and leaves of the trees blending together in a massive, varicolored carpet.

But Denny had eyes for none of this; he sought only Bill. He cast a long, anxious glance around, and conviction settled upon him that Bill was lost. He gave vent to one dismal howl of lonesomeness and followed the herd.

The herd had gone far enough to the southward before Denny turned them to get on the wrong side of a divide. So when it reached the foot of old Baldy, McCoy Creek was far to the north; and it was in a large, rolling, timber-covered region between three

mountains, which was called Jack-Knife Basin. And it was far from the regular trail out of the mountains.

By noon Denny was hungry. He had always been somewhat pampered for a sheep-dog with his three good meals a day, and being violently deprived of them hurt. But he knew the herd must go on.

All day the dog kept his charges moving through the timber in a general westerly direction. Shortly before sundown the leaders came out on top of a timberless ridge.

Denny recognized a natural bed-ground, and he trotted slowly around in front of the herd and checked the leaders. He would let them feed on the ridge until it was nearly dark; then he would round them up and make them lie down. He had done that often for Bill.

He climbed to the top of a slight rise and sat down while he waited for night to come. Just as dusk began to fall some peculiar sense warned him to look down the ridge on the other side of the herd. He did so and instinctively cowered, while the hair on his neck rose in an enormous ruff. Sitting there on his haunches with a curling red tongue lolling out in a sardonic grin was a gigantic timber wolf.

With the keen perception of the wild the wolf had already sensed that the band was without a herder, so he was taking his time picking out a victim before his death charge. Had it been a mere coyote Denny would have known how to deal with him—but a wolf!

The gray marauder rose to his feet and stretched himself leisurely. The preoccupied sheep were within half a dozen rods of him, but they took no notice.

Then the wolf went into action with dynamic energy. He was within ten feet of the sheep before they noticed him. They swerved to either side in blind panic and sheep-like got in each other's road and were soon piled up three deep.

The wolf had ample time to kill a dozen; but he was particular. Before making his rush he had picked out a fat, juicy lamb, one of the largest in the herd, and he was determined to have it. Through the brush they sped, the frightened lamb making the woods ring with its terrified blattings.

Soon the wolf was close enough to make a grab, and he neatly ham-strung the lamb. Before it had time to fall the deadly fangs

were buried in its throat, and the lamb's career was over save for a few agonized kicks and wheezes.

The wolf stood over his victim and surveyed the remainder of the herd with a red grin. Apparently he was debating with himself the advisability of further killings before appeasing his hunger. Then suddenly he was bowled over and over as seventy-five pounds of righteous wrath struck him with the force of a pile-driver.

Denny was on top of the wolf in a second, his powerful jaws striving for the deadly throat hold. The long fur on the wolf's neck defied his first effort; and before he could get another hold the wolf's powerful hind legs doubled up beneath him, and as they straightened Denny was thrown four feet in the air. The wolf bounded to his feet like a rubber ball.

They feinted for an opening for a moment like cautious boxers; then the wolf was in and out like a flash of grayish light, and a small stream of blood trickled down Denny's shoulder.

The wolf came in again, and Denny rose on his hind legs to meet him. They wrestled for a moment before Denny went over backward before superior weight and strength. The wolf made a swift try for the throat hold—the only one which a wolf will hold on to—and, failing to make it, leaped away.

Now the marauder began typical wolf tactics. Slash and get away. Slash and get away. Blood flowed from Denny from a score of wounds. A few times he met the foe breast to breast; but each time he was thrown, though always he contrived to protect his throat and roll free. Staggering to his feet, he would rush the enemy, but never seemed able to inflict injury.

Denny's eyes began to grow dim and his legs wobbly; but always he bared in—no thought of defeat in his indomitable soul. Always he was on the aggressive; and gradually the wolf backed away after each dash in, until they were in the brush on the side of the ridge.

The wolf leaped in, ripped open another wound and bounced out again; but his bound back was checked by a bush. Instantly Denny was upon him. They rose on their hind legs; but this time Denny did not try to wrestle. His bulging Great-Dane jaws clamped down over the wolf's left foreleg, pulverizing the tender bones of the knee.

Under the supreme agony the wolf let out a howl which made the cowering sheep shrivel inside their skins; but Denny shut his eyes and held on. The wolf slashed, kicked, bucked, and howled as if possessed by a thousand devils; but Denny's jaws were unyielding as a vise.

From time to time Denny was forced to shift his hold slightly, and each new move marked a new point of torture to his antagonist. Finally the wolf, following a tremendous struggle in which he had yanked the dog all through the brush, went over on his back. That instant Denny loosened his hold and made a frantic grab for the throat. But the instant he moved, the great hind legs doubled under him and straightened with a powerful recoil that shot the dog ten feet into the brush.

Denny was up and on his feet as if the earth had thrown him back; ready to face the next charge. But there was none to face. Mr. Wolf had had sufficient, and was scurrying through the brush as fast as his three good legs would carry him.

Denny shook himself and felt terribly weak. He wanted to lie down and rest, but the herd was not gathered. He found that the scared sheep had bunched on the bed-ground; yet nevertheless he made a wide, back-tracking circle lest some foolish lamb had stayed behind before he was satisfied.

Now his hunger returned with redoubled fury. He walked over to the lamb the wolf had killed. The fresh blood assailed his nostrils maddeningly. Here was meat, and he was fearfully hungry; but—Bill had never allowed him to eat raw meat. It had been drilled into him that dead sheep were not to be eaten, even though they had been freshly killed by coyotes. Hunger and the influence of Bill's training battled within him.

In the end Denny trotted weakly to a small spring half a mile away and made his supper on a drink of water and a long breath. Then he returned to the herd and licked his wounds through the long night.

In the morning Denny tried to take his bearings. He knew that he must get the sheep out of the mountains, and he knew where they should go when they were out—to the ranch. Then, too, there was a tang in the air which told him that he must hurry—a faint, but to him sure, sign that snow was coming.

Straight ahead loomed the towering crest of Caribou Mountain. To take the herd

over the top of that was impossible. To the south of that stood another mountain scarcely less formidable.

But between the two shone a narrow, deep strip of blue sky. Straight for that gap in the mountains Denny headed his herd.

Four days later a fat band of sheep emerged on to Homer Creek Flat at the foot of the south end of Caribou. Behind them, holding them together, was a nondescript-looking dog whose ribs protruded until they could be plainly seen through the thick mat of blood-stained hair on his sides, and whose hip bones stuck up like the ears on a prickly pear.

Not for a moment during the daylight did the sheep allow Denny to rest. The moment he stopped trotting from flank to flank they would scatter or turn in the wrong direction. Nor were his nights much better. Did he lie down on one side of the band he could see the green, baleful eyes of hungry coyotes peering from the darkness on the other. With a roar he would charge and the eyes would disappear, and presently there would come an insulting yip from another direction.

The fight with the wolf had weakened him so that he knew in his heart that he was no match even for a coyote; but he allowed no hint of that weakness to appear as he bayed back defiance to the demoniacal voices which made the nights hideous with their clamor.

Had he once weakened the gray marauders would have cut the herd to pieces. But from some mysterious supply of reserve energy he drew strength to make his challenge sound confident and eager.

Five days without a mouthful to eat, sore and mangled to boot; yet a count of the herd would have shown only one sheep short from the time Bill Peterson had been injured.

Because of that short detour at the start the herd had come on to the flats fully thirty miles south of where it should have done. Behind, somewhere on old Baldy, a dozen men combed the timber while conviction settled upon them that the herd was irretrievably lost.

That night Denny bedded his charges on an old bed-ground, and here he found a few old mutton bones. Ravenously he fed upon them; grinding them to powder before swallowing. The last bone was gone all too soon, but he felt better.

In the night it snowed—only a few inches

on the flats, and by mid-afternoon that had melted; but on old Baldy it dropped eighteen inches of heavy snow which would remain there for seven months.

Now Denny knew his course. He knew exactly where the ranch lay, and he hustled the herd along as fast as his sore, stiff limbs would permit. He found no more bones. Several times he sighted sheep-camps hurrying along to get off the foot-hills before Winter set in; but he dared not leave the herd to investigate them.

Also he came close to several herds—once so close that the leaders wanted to mix. Bravely Denny loped around and turned his leaders in another direction. He knew that mix-ups on the range were tabu.

From edge to edge of the herd Denny trotted bravely, turning the flanks inward and urging the stragglers on, though each step was torture to his weary legs. Weak from loss of blood and famine though he was, he trotted grimly on—from edge to edge, from flank to flank.

Nor was he unaware that the means to get relief from the gnawing inside of him and strength to go on was ever within his power. One bite at any fat lamb's throat and he would have meat. But that was the one thing he would not do. Wolves and coyotes did that—and they were enemies.



WITH his leg in a plaster cast Bill Peterson reclined beside an open window in a bedroom of Dave Shannon's house. The window faced the east. Miles away Bill could see the lofty crest of Caribou, now mantled with a blanket of snow which would not disappear for weary months.

Beyond Caribou, higher still, was old Baldy; and on old Baldy was—what? Bill's mind never ceased to speculate.

Suddenly a familiar sound fell upon Bill's ears. He raised himself on an elbow where he could get a better look, and he saw that his ears had not deceived him. He had heard the tinkling of sheep-bells, and already the leaders of the herd were in sight.

Bill's heart gave a jump as he recognized an old, mouse-colored Lincoln ewe on lead. It was his herd.

"Mrs. Shannon!" he called excitedly.

Mrs. Shannon ran into the room.

"Look! The herd! The boys have found 'em," Bill said.

"It can't be," Mrs. Shannon demurred. "Dave called up on the phone not an hour ago from Herman and said that they had given the herd up. He said if any of the sheep were alive yet they were snowed in somewhere on old Baldy."

But the herd was now in sight, so that Bill knew he could not be mistaken. And behind it a dog trotted from side to side on legs which wobbled and frequently collapsed altogether under him. Yet each time he managed somehow to get up and go on—from edge to edge of the herd. From flank to flank.

From Bill Peterson's lips went a piercing whistle that caused Mrs. Shannon to scream and clap her hands to her ears. But it was

a sound as from heaven itself to the worn-out dog. He stopped, and his drooping ears shot up eagerly.

"Denny! Here, Denny!" Bill almost sobbed. "Come here!"

Denny was relieved at last. Bill had come back; therefore he could go off duty. Straight toward the open window came the dog with a wabby, yet eager, lope. In a moment he was in Bill's arms.

"Mrs. Shannon," Bill said with lips that quivered, "Denny has brought that herd in alone, more than a hundred miles, an' he's starvin'. If you ever did cook a good meal, for the love o' Mike cook one now."

"Nothing is too good for Denny," Mrs. Shannon agreed.

ROUTED 7 INDIANS WITH AN AX

by Lewis Appleton Baker

FULL as is the history of the border States with the courageous acts of the women of the time, it would seem that none can surpass, if, indeed, equal that of Mrs. John Merrill, of Nelson County, Kentucky, in its physical prowess or in the actual results accomplished. At this day and period it is difficult even to imagine that such a feat could have been performed by any woman, no matter how strong and hardy.

During the Summer of 1787, Mr. Merrill's cabin was attacked by seven wandering Indians. The barking of the watch-dog at midnight was the family's first knowledge of the approach of any one, and, unfortunately, Mr. Merrill, opening the door to learn what was afoot, had his thigh and arm immediately broken by rifle fire, thus placing him at the very beginning *hors combat*. As he fell he cried out to his wife to close the door. Mrs. Merrill, the equal of any man in both strength and courage, seized the ax and dropped the bar of the door, just as several Indians appeared in view.

It was not long, however, before they had effected a breach and were half-way into the little room. With only the ax as a weapon this Amazonian woman killed or seriously wounded four of her assailants.

The other three, ascending to the roof,

made an effort to make an entrance by means of the great chimney.

Undaunted, the lone defender, with four savages wallowing in their blood at her feet, seized her choicest possession, a feather bed, and, ripping it open, threw it upon the fire, making a blinding smoke, in which two of the remaining fiends dropped to the hearth nearly insensible. It was but the work of a moment to dispatch these two as she had the others.

One would have thought that this would have been enough for the sole survivor, but apparently, he, too, was not devoid of courage. For scarcely had she succeeded in ridding herself of those who had come down the chimney, than her attention was called to the last one, who was even then hurling himself over the threshold of the broken door. There was not even time to raise her weapon for a good blow, but just as it was in her hands, she drew the keen edge of the gory ax across the cheek of the intruder, inflicting a deep gash.

Apparently, this was too much even for him, and with one terrific yell he made for the forest, never stopping probably until he reached Chillicothe, where his account of the terrible "long knife squaw," together with his appearance, was sufficient to protect the Merrill family from assaults for the future, unless with a regiment of braves.